

Good News, Bad News At The State Of The City Address

By Cathy Tyson

On the one hand, there's plenty to be proud of; on the other hand the burden of an inherited \$24 million dollar accumulation of road repairs is overwhelming. According to Mayor Carol Federighi, "In a snapshot, the City is healthy and solvent with an increasingly vibrant downtown." The bad news is, "There is insufficient money to fix the roads, and not enough money for police staffing."

The Mayor outlined the good, the bad and the ugly at last week's General Meeting of the Lafayette Homeowners Council. The Sequoia Room of the Lafayette Community Center was filled with concerned residents and a number of homeowner association representatives. It was a friendly meeting until the question and answer portion of the evening following the Mayor's "State of the City" talk.

The Good News

A variety of projects are either being planned or in a range of stages of completion for the benefit the citizens of Lafayette. Construction is well under way at the new Lafayette Library and Learning Center, which is on track to open in 2009. The City approved an 80-unit luxury condominium project on the western edge of town near the Veteran's Hall. An important component of the project will tentatively be 18 units of off-site low-income housing. A 20-unit condominium project is nearing approval on the east side of town near the Lafayette Park Hotel. The site of Butler-Conti Dodge has been recommended for affordable senior housing. The Lafayette Mercantile Building is nearing completion, and Whole Foods is coming to town. The Petanque recreation area and the multi-sport rink also opened this year.

The Bad News

"The goal is to develop a strategy to address our \$24 million dollar road repair backlog," said Federighi. "We simply don't have all the money that we need to do all the things we want to do." She went on to explain with the help of pie charts of where the money comes from and where the money goes, taking special care to explain how different pots of money have specific spending requirements.

The Ugly

The intensity of the meeting was definitely kicked up a notch when it came time for questions and answers. In a

nutshell, many attendees were concerned about the road situation. Questions included, how about having less money in reserves and more money available for police? If we (residents) can raise \$12 million dollars for the library, why can't we figure out road repair? There were suggestions to prioritize city issues, that nothing gets done until, say, the top two or three priorities are tackled. One disgruntled homeowner noted, the roads are a concern for residents, but didn't feel like it was a concern for the City Council.

Current City Council Member and incoming Mayor Mike Anderson invited the crowd to be, "be part of the process. We need your participation." Complimenting citizens for their expertise in a variety of fields, he suggested perhaps resident groups could help address the problem and look for unique solutions.

With \$11.5 million dollars projected in the general fund for 2007-2008 and \$24 million dollar funding gap to fix the roads, the solution remains a mystery, at least for the time being.

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